

# Adaptive Real-Time Scheduling for Legacy Multimedia Applications

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Multimedia applications are often executed on standard Personal Computers. The absence of established standards has hindered the adoption of real-time scheduling solutions in this class of applications. Developers have adopted a wide range of heuristic approaches to achieve an acceptable timing behaviour but the result is often unreliable. We propose a mechanism to extend the benefits of real-time scheduling to *legacy* applications based on the combination of two techniques: 1) a real-time monitor that observes and infers the activation period of the application, and 2) a feedback mechanism that adapts the scheduling parameters to improve its real-time performance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, computers have emerged as one of the most effective means to produce, store and distribute multimedia contents. Such applications are usually referred to as *time-sensitive*, meaning that the Quality of Service (QoS) they offer is related to their ability to execute respecting some temporal constraints.

In a modern computing environment, several tasks can be executed concurrently on the same processor (or processors). Therefore a prominent role for the provision of temporal guarantees is taken by the scheduling policy. Common scheduling solutions adopted in General Purpose Operating Systems (GPOSs) do not offer an acceptable performance. Neither are hard real-time scheduling algorithms [Liu and Layland 1973] commonly regarded as appropriate solutions. Hard real-time guarantees are not required by multimedia applications: moderate violations of temporal constraints can be conveniently traded for a more efficient utilisation of the system as far as they are kept under control. For these applications, a superior scheduling choice is offered by such soft real-time schedulers as the *resource reservations* [Rajkumar et al. 1998], which guarantee a share of the CPU time to each task or group of tasks under any workload condition. Even using this solution,

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though, the selection of appropriate scheduling parameters can be very challenging if the execution requirements of the application are time-varying or unknown. This problem is difficult to surmount unless an adaptive scheduling mechanism is used that estimates the application requirements and adapts the scheduling parameters accordingly. Proposals of this kind have been made in the recent past [Abeni and Buttazzo 1999; Abeni et al. 2005] but they make some important and restrictive assumptions. In particular, applications have to be structured as a sequence of real-time jobs and have to notify the start and the termination of each job to the scheduler by means of an appropriate Application Programming Interfaces (API). This way it is possible to monitor the application and take corrective actions when a deviation is detected from the desired temporal evolution.

An important practical problem hindering the application of this paradigm is that the real-time support present in modern GPOSs is mostly limited to the POSIX real-time extensions [IEEE 2004]. This API provides very useful features for embedded control systems, but is generally recognised as unfit for multimedia applications. Only recently has a new generation of specific scheduling solutions for this type of applications made inroad into experimental versions of standard GPOSs<sup>1</sup>.

The use of a specialised API, when available, is relatively easy for applications developed from scratch. When the source code is available, it is possible to review it inserting the appropriate API calls. In other cases, the source code of the application is unavailable or, more simply, the software producers are not willing to take the risk of an expensive and potentially error-prone refactoring. Therefore, it is easy to predict the presence of a large number of legacy real-time applications for many years to come. In this paper, we use the term *legacy applications* meaning *applications that are implicitly characterised by temporal constraints, but are not developed using a specific API for real-time computing*. In legacy applications, developers contrive to achieve an acceptable timing behaviour by a large range of heuristic solutions (including a generous use of buffering). The robustness of these solutions can be very low when the system is heavily loaded. Moreover, the presence of large buffers increases the latency of the application and reduces its interactivity.

We make the point that, even for legacy applications, a controllable and robust timing performance is best achieved operating at the *scheduling level*. The purpose of the research presented in this paper is then the development of a scheduling mechanism, called Legacy Feedback scheduler (LFS++), that: 1) extends the benefits of real-time scheduling to legacy applications, and 2) operates in a completely transparent way without requiring any modification to the application. This is a complex and multifaceted problem whose solution requires: 1) to correctly infer the activation pattern (multimedia applications are typically periodic, the problem is essentially the inference of the period); 2) to estimate (as tightly as possible) the computation requirements. To identify the period we treat an application as a black box and keep track of a set of events generated by the kernel. The subsequent use of Fourier analysis on the time series of these events allows us to identify the dominant frequencies (peaks in the spectrum), and hence the period of the application. The computing requirements are indirectly identified by accounting for the com-

<sup>1</sup>An example of this kind is offered by the AQuoSA project (website <http://aquosa.sourceforge.net>) or by the LITMUS-RT project (website [www.cs.unc.edu/~anderson/litmus-rt/](http://www.cs.unc.edu/~anderson/litmus-rt/)).

putation time used by the task in every sampling interval. The estimation of the computation requirements and of the period allows us to identify the fraction of CPU required by the application and make the appropriate scheduling choice.

In addition to providing the algorithmic foundations for this approach, in the paper we show how it can effectively be implemented in the context of the Linux kernel (fitted out with a resource reservation scheduler). We report an extensive experimental validation showing the radical improvement of our solution over the standard scheduler. A very important issue is how to ensure a positive interaction with other mechanisms present in the kernel that can have an impact on the computation time of the applications. As an important example, we consider the power management system, which operates on the frequency of the CPU and plays a fundamental role in mobile devices. In the paper, we show an architectural solution to achieve a graceful integration between our adaptive scheduler and the power manager and offer full experimental evidence of the effectiveness of this combination.

The paper is organised as follows. In Section 2, the related literature is briefly surveyed. In Section 3, we introduce the terminology on real-time scheduling used throughout the paper and the scheduling solution that we build upon. In Section 4, we describe the problem and provide an overview on our solution. In Section 5, we describe the algorithmic foundations of our approach, while in Section 6 we present our implementation. In Section 7 we offer experiments to prove the effectiveness of the approach. Finally, conclusions are drawn in Section 8.

## 2. RELATED WORK

In the last few years, there has been a considerable amount of research on how to express and guarantee temporal constraints for time sensitive applications. A representative example are the reservation-based schedulers [Mercer et al. 1993; Rajkumar et al. 1998; Abeni and Buttazzo 1998]. Such algorithms enable a fine-grained control on the fraction of CPU time (bandwidth) devoted to each application but the point remains open of how to properly choose the scheduling parameters if the computation requirements are not known and/or change over time.

A popular solution to this problem is the use of adaptive mechanisms. A first possibility of this kind is to perform *application-level adaptation* [Wüst et al. 2005]. The idea is that in response to fluctuations in the availability of resources, the application changes its mode to scale up or down the workload it generates. In this paper, we take the complementary approach: resource allocation is adaptively tuned to fit the application requirements (*resource-level adaptation*).

Resource level adaptation (particularly for the CPU) can be obtained by applying feedback control to real-time scheduling, as shown by several authors [Li and Nahrstedt 1998; Abeni et al. 2002; C. Lu and Son 2002; Goel et al. 2004; Abeni et al. 2005]. In such approaches, while the applications execute, their real-time behaviour is monitored and corrective actions are taken by changing the scheduling parameters to meet some QoS related objectives. Computing models that represent an alternative to the real-time task model have been proposed by different authors. An interesting example is offered by the Timely Computing Base (TCB) model proposed by Verissimo et al. [Verissimo and Casimiro 2002], which can be combined with an application-level QoS adaptation [Casimiro and Verissimo 2001] mechanism.

However, all of the approaches mentioned above mandate the use of some kind of specialised API within the application, and are not easily applied to legacy applications. The use of a specialised API is assumed by several authors proposing an Operating System support for multimedia and time-sensitive applications [Leslie et al. 1996; Jones et al. 1996; Krasic et al. 2009].

More similar to our approach is the work proposed by Steere et al. [Steere et al. 1999], who propose a reservation scheme implemented in the Linux kernel, and a feedback-based controller to adjust the scheduling parameters. The authors point out the need for detecting the period, but they do not propose any solution other than the choice of default values. Their work is based on so called “symbiotic” interfaces, a sort of API used by applications in order to allow external components to monitor their progress. Similar is the approach proposed by Eide et al. [Eide et al. 2004], in the context of the QuO framework [Krishnamurthy et al. 2001]. Although the authors claim that their solution is “non-invasive”, the approach is clearly targeted at applications based on the RT-Corba middleware (in fact an API), which simplifies the interaction with a resource allocation module. In our work, the adaptation mechanism is entirely transparent to the applications.

The provision of QoS guarantees for legacy applications has been also explored in the networking community. Tsetsekas et al. [Tsetsekas et al. 2001] propose the use of proxy servers to determine the network requirements of Internet applications. The approach is not applicable to CPU allocation. To the best of our knowledge, the first work providing system support for unmodified (possibly uncooperative) applications that do not use any specialised API is Redline [Yang et al. 2008], which is based on a reservation-based scheduler and uses some *lightweight specifications* to associate scheduling parameters with the applications. The specifications required by Redline are system dependent, and can also depend on the applications’ input – for example, the reservation period for a video player depends on the video frame rate. The work presented in this paper is orthogonal to Redline: an adaptive mechanism for inferring the specifications from the applications at run time.

From the scheduling point of view, the first technique developed explicitly to support adaptive scheduling of legacy applications is the so called Legacy Feedback Scheduler (LFS) [Abeni and Palopoli 2009]. In the LFS scheme, the scheduler samples a binary variable that simply says whether the task received enough computation in the last period or not. Although we have taken inspiration from this scheme for the scheduler presented in this paper (not surprisingly called LFS++), we use a finer grain for the feedback information (the “sensor” inside the kernel measures the amount of CPU consumed by the task), and the estimation of the period allows us to come up with a more precise estimate for the required bandwidth. Therefore, the application of LFS++ necessarily results in a better QoS.

One of the issues in our paper is the period detection. This problem corresponds to the problem of *pitch detection*, very much studied in the signal processing theory. A first class of algorithms to determine the pitch of a periodic signal works on the waveform in the time domain. In their simplest form, such algorithms just measure the rate of events like zero-crossings or local peaks/dips of the signal (e.g., the Zero-Crossing Rate algorithm [Kedem 1986]). These methods work only with simple waveforms. To deal with complex waveforms, one possibility is to work with the fre-

quency domain representation of the signal (as we do in this paper). Some authors consider the components of the frequency spectrum, trying to infer the relevant harmonics it presents, and reconstructing its fundamental frequency [Piszczański and Galler 1979]. The algorithm we developed is based on similar principles, but we exploit some specific characteristics of our problem to reduce the complexity of the detection. Different alternatives, such as the use of Cepstral analysis [Bogert et al. 1963], have an unaffordable overhead for our application.

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this section, we provide some basic terminology on the real-time tasking model and on the scheduling algorithm adopted in this work.

#### 3.1 The Real-Time Task Model

In real-time theory, a system is by and large modelled as a set  $\Gamma = \{\tau_i\}$  of real-time tasks. The term *task* is used to denote either a process (owning a private memory space) or a thread (sharing the memory space with other threads). A task  $\tau_i$  is modelled as a sequence of *jobs* and is described by a pair  $(C_i, P_i)$ :  $C_i$  is the worst-case execution time for the individual jobs of  $\tau_i$ , and  $P_i$  is the minimum inter-arrival time between two consecutive jobs (or the task period in case of periodic tasks). Every job should terminate before the arrival of the next job, an implicit deadline.

#### 3.2 The CBS Scheduler

The scheduling algorithm that we use in this paper belongs to the family of the so called *resource reservation* schedulers. A resource reservation scheduler allows one to allocate to each task  $\tau_i$  (or to each set of tasks) a computation budget of  $Q_i^s$  time units in every reservation period of duration  $T_i^s$  time units. This way, not only can the execution rate be controlled (the task receives a fraction  $Q_i^s/T_i^s$  of the CPU time) but also the granularity of the CPU allocation can be decided for every single task by the reservation period  $T_i^s$ .

The particular algorithm used in this work to implement the reservation behaviour is a hard-reservation variation [Palopoli et al. 2009] of the Constant Bandwidth Server (CBS) [Abeni and Buttazzo 1998], which implements CPU reservations building on top of an Earliest Deadline First (EDF) scheduler. The basic CBS idea is to schedule tasks based on their *scheduling deadlines*  $d_i^s$ , with  $d_i^s$  increased by  $T_i^s$  every time  $\tau_i$  executes for a time  $Q_i^s$ . Each time a task enters the ready queue (for example when a job is activated or when the task wakes up from a blocking I/O operation), the scheduler checks if the current budget and scheduling deadline can be used without exceeding the fraction  $\frac{Q_i^s}{T_i^s}$  of the CPU time. In the negative case, the budget and the deadline are updated with appropriate values [Abeni and Buttazzo 1998]. The scheduling deadline is used to decide the CPU assignment according to EDF. The algorithm provably enjoys the properties required to resource reservation schedulers if the following *schedulability condition* is met:

$$\sum_{i=1}^N \frac{Q_i^s}{T_i^s} \leq 1. \quad (1)$$

Notably, the rules of the CBS make the schedulability condition valid even in case

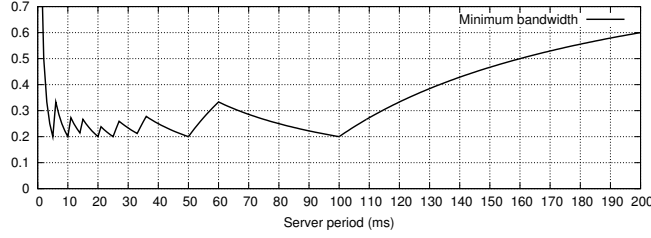


Fig. 1. Fraction of CPU  $Q_i^s/T_i^s$  required to correctly schedule a real-time task with 20% utilisation  $C = 20$  ms,  $P = 100$  ms.

of tasks performing I/O operations. The interested reader is referred to the cited paper for additional details on the rules of the algorithm and on its properties.

#### 4. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION AND SOLUTION OVERVIEW

When we use a reservation-based scheduler for a real-time task, the problem arises of how to choose the  $(Q_i^s, T_i^s)$  parameters so that real-time constraints are met.

The problem has easy solutions if the timing parameters of the task are known *a priori*. In particular, if the task is periodic with period  $P_i$  and if we know its worst case execution time  $C_i$ , then we can simply set  $T_i^s = P_i$  and  $Q_i^s = C_i$  and the task provably meets all of its deadlines [Abeni and Buttazzo 1998]. Alternatively, if we know the probability distributions of the inter-arrival and execution times, the server parameters  $T_i^s$  and  $Q_i^s$  can be set so that the task meets its deadlines with a minimum guaranteed probability. If a single server is used to schedule multiple tasks, hierarchical scheduling analysis [Mok et al. 2001] can be used to properly assign the scheduling parameters.

The problem with legacy applications is that we cannot rely on any such prior knowledge of the execution requirements, and a wrong choice of the parameters can lead to a severe performance degradation. This is particularly evident for the choice of the budget  $Q_i^s$ . Indeed, even assuming a perfect knowledge of the application period, if we choose too small a value for  $Q_i^s$  (compared to the average CPU utilisation of the task), the application is likely to receive a very bad QoS. Likewise, a large value of  $Q_i^s$  affects adversely the possibility to admit new applications.

Much less obvious but equally relevant can be the detrimental effects of a bad choice for the reservation period  $T_i^s$ . This problem was discussed in our previous work [Cucinotta et al. 2009] using an analysis technique inspired to the supply bound function [Lehoczky et al. 1989]. It is very illustrative to report here the correct values of the budget  $Q_i^s$  (and hence of the bandwidth  $B_i^s$ ) required to schedule a simple periodic task with  $C_i = 20$ ms,  $P_i = 100$ ms. As it is possible to see in Figure 1, the required bandwidth ranges from the correct value (20%) to very high values (more than 60%) if the server period is chosen too small or too large. The correct bandwidth (20%) is required choosing  $T_i^s$  equal to the task period or to a sub-multiple of the task period. However, the choice  $T_i^s = P_i$  is the most robust, in that moderate errors in the choice of the period do not lead to an excessive waste of bandwidth. On the contrary if we choose, for instance,  $T_i^s = \frac{P_i}{3} = 33$ ms, then even an error of a few milliseconds in the choice of the period easily raises the

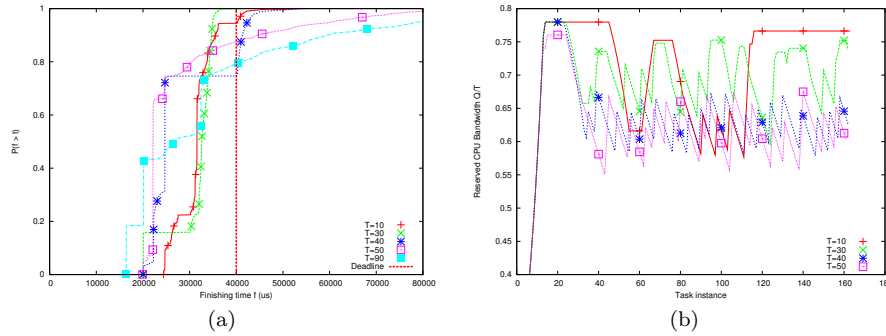


Fig. 2. (a) CDF of the response times for a task with period  $P = 40ms$  and various reservation periods  $T^s$ . (b) Fraction of bandwidth allocated to a periodic task ( $C = 20ms, P = 40ms$ ) by LFS.

required bandwidth to a value close to 30% (with an over-allocation of bandwidth close to 50%). These considerations suggest a possible inefficiency in scheduling real-time periodic tasks by a class of algorithms (such as the Proportional Share algorithms), for which the scheduling period is not explicitly considered.

The discussion above leads to the conclusion that an appropriate choice of the scheduling parameters can only be made if we construct a close estimation of  $P_i$  (which is usually a fixed parameter) and a statistical estimation of the computation time (e.g., a proper distribution percentile).

#### 4.1 An Example

The theoretical analysis presented in the previous subsection is confirmed by some simple examples with two periodic tasks executed on real hardware.

In different experiments, we have scheduled each of the applications by a reservation with different parameters. The server period  $T_i^s$  was chosen arbitrarily *a-priori*, while the budget was dynamically identified by the LFS algorithm [Abeni and Palopoli 2008] to reduce the number of missed deadlines. Figure 2 (a) reports the Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF) of the response-time of one of the periodic tasks (having period  $P = 40ms$ ), for the different experiments. The figure shows that a server period smaller than or equal to the application period leads to a good performance. Indeed, the CDFs for  $T^s < P$  have very short tails after 40ms. However, looking at Figure 2 (b), which reports the corresponding dynamic bandwidth allocations made by LFS, it is clear that the best allocation is the one with the server period equal to the application period, corresponding to a lower bandwidth utilisation of the system.

The bandwidth waste resulting from the use of integer sub-multiples of the task period as server period, is greater than theoretically. This was also expected, because the theoretical discussion above refers to the minimum theoretical budget needed to schedule the real-time task hosted by the reservation, while the LFS algorithm approximates (and typically significantly overestimates) this budget.

The experiments above show that the best results, both in terms of application performance, and of allocated bandwidth, are achieved when the server period is

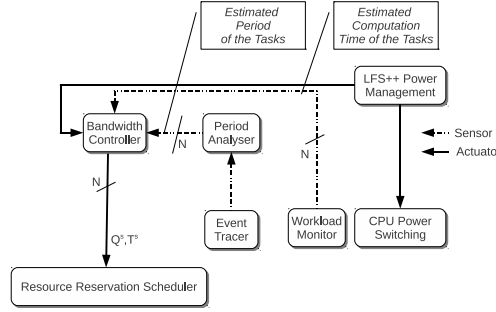


Fig. 3. Block diagram of the algorithmic solution used in LFS++.

chosen in a small neighbourhood of the task period.

#### 4.2 Our Approach

A very high level description of the LFS++ approach is in the block-scheme in Figure 3. The legacy real-time tasks are scheduled through a Resource Reservation scheduler. The correct parameters ( $Q_i^s$ ,  $T_i^s$ ) are periodically identified by a *Bandwidth Controller*. This component is a multiple input multiple output (MIMO) controller that uses as its input: 1) the estimated period of the tasks and 2) the time consumed by the tasks during the last sampling period (in the picture some of the arrows carry a vector of quantities: one for each of the  $N$  tasks).

For each task, the period is reconstructed by a *Period Analyser*, based on a sequence of events traced in the kernel. This component is activated periodically in order to detect possible dynamic changes in the application period. However, since its computation requirements are greater than the ones of the bandwidth controller (see Section 7), the latter is typically executed with a higher rate.

In our particular design, the bandwidth controller operates in two steps. In the first step, a budget request  $Q_i^{req}$  is computed for each task, using the information on the time consumed by the task in the last period and the past history of its evolution. The budget requests  $Q_i^{req}$  and  $T_i^s$  are submitted to a *supervisor* component, whose purpose is to enforce the *global* schedulability condition in Equation (1). Namely, if the requests do not saturate the total available bandwidth, they can be entirely granted  $Q_i^s = Q_i^{req}$ . Otherwise they have to be curbed to fit in the bound. The policy used to generate a feasible choice of budgets from the requests has a strong impact on the QoS of the tasks during an overload condition. As an example, it is possible to use a weighted optimisation problem or a weighted compression function that penalises the tasks with a smaller weight.

For systems with dynamic CPU frequency scaling capabilities, possible changes in the CPU speed (e.g., for power saving purposes), need to be coordinated with such a feedback-based control logic to avoid anomalies in the temporal behaviour of the tasks. Therefore, we introduced a new block (power management) that interacts with the pre-existing power-management mechanisms present in the kernel.

While the supervisor has been discussed in our previous work [Palopoli et al. 2009; Abeni and Palopoli 2009], the design of the other blocks raises important



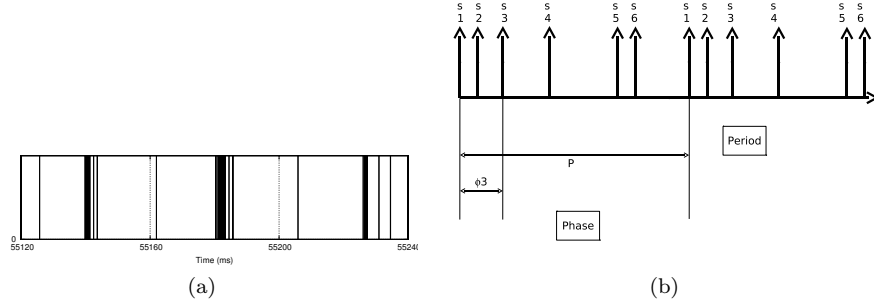


Fig. 4. (a) a sequence of events associated to a segment of execution of an application, (a) The mathematical model as a sequence of Dirac's  $\delta$ .

theoretical and architectural issues tapping several disciplines. In particular, the identification of the task parameters carried out by the Bandwidth Controller is essentially a theoretical problem, which can be solved without any commitment to a specific architectural choice. On the contrary, the design of the event tracing mechanism, of the workload monitor and of the power management block is, to a large extent, architecture dependent.

## 5. IDENTIFYING THE TASK PARAMETERS

In this section, we dwell on the algorithmic foundation that underpins the design of the task controller. We assume the presence of some kernel or middleware components that operate as “sensors” providing the period analyser and the bandwidth controller with the necessary input. Clearly, the quality of the result depends on the accuracy and on the frequency with which this information is collected.

### 5.1 The Period Analyser

The Period Analyser, as discussed in Section 4, plays a crucial role in our construction. In this section, we discuss how this component can be designed. The activation of a job for a task is, in a GPOS, associated with a state transition from **BLOCKED** to **READY**. This event is said a *wakeup event* (WKE). In the idealised situation in which a job activation is the only WKE, the period detection would simply amount to identifying the interval between two consecutive occurrences of this event. In real applications, unfortunately, we can have many of these events even during a job execution (e.g., to perform I/O operations, or to access mutually exclusive memory areas). Generally speaking, by the term *scheduling related event* (SRE) we denote any event that could potentially be associated to a state transition of the task. As an example, consider the excerpt of a trace recorded from an MPEG player and reported in Figure 4.(a). Each event is represented as a vertical line. We observe events (group of adjacent lines) that are repeated with a fairly regular spacing, in addition to spurious events (i.e., events that occur only occasionally).

In the rest of the section, we make the simplifying assumption that a trace only consists of periodically repeated bursts (without spurious events). As shown in the experimental section, the results of the practical application of the methodology to

real programs do not significantly differ from the theoretical expectations (proving a good degree of robustness to un-modelled effects).

A possible way for modelling this behaviour is to conceptually associate each event at time  $t_0$  with a Dirac delta at time  $t_0$ , denoted by  $\delta(t - t_0)$ . Therefore, if  $s_i$  symbolically represents an event, its periodic repetition can be modelled as a train of Dirac  $\delta$ :  $s_i(t) = \sum_{h=-\infty}^{\infty} \delta(t - \phi_i + hP)$ , where  $\phi_i$  is the temporal offset (phase) of the event inside the period (see Figure 4.(b)). A trace can then be modelled as the sum of all signals  $s_i$ :  $s(t) = \sum_{i=1}^K s_i(t)$ ,  $K$  being the total number of events within each periodic activation of the task.

The Fourier Transform of  $s(t)$  is given by:

$$S(f) = \mathcal{F}(s(t)) = \frac{1}{P} \sum_{i=1}^K \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-jn2\pi f_0 \phi_i} \delta(f - nf_0),$$

where  $f$  is the frequency variable and  $f_0 = 1/P$ . Now, suppose that the observation horizon  $H$  is limited to  $L$  sampling periods ( $H = LP$ ). We can model this effect multiplying the signal  $s(t)$  by  $G_H(t - \frac{H}{2})$ , where:

$$G_H(t) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } |t| \leq H/2 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Applying standard arguments of signals and systems theory, we get:

$$\begin{aligned} S(f) &= \frac{H}{P} e^{-j2\pi f H/2} \sum_{i=1}^K \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-jn2\pi f_0 \phi_i} \text{sinc}(\pi(f - nf_0)H) = \\ &= \frac{H}{P} e^{-j2\pi f H/2} \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} \left( \sum_{i=1}^K e^{-jn2\pi f_0 \phi_i} \right) \text{sinc}(\pi(f - nf_0)H) \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $\text{sinc}(x) = \sin(x)/x$ . The right hand side of Equation (2) consists of a linear combination (in the complex domain) of the functions  $\text{sinc}(\pi(f - nf_0)H)$ . Considering that each sinc function has the highest peak when its argument is equal to 0, the amplitude spectrum of their linear combination has the peaks in  $f = nf_0$ . The distance  $f_0 = 1/P$  between two adjacent peaks corresponds to the inverse of the period. Summarising, a task period can be identified by: 1) computing the spectrum of the signal  $s(t)$ , and 2) estimating its peaks and their distance.

## 5.2 Computation of the Spectrum

The spectrum is computed in the range of frequency  $[f_{min}, f_{max}]$  with a step  $\delta f$ . This computation can be made iteratively. Indeed, whenever we record the  $i^{th}$  event at time  $\bar{t}_i$ , we can model it as a Dirac  $\delta(t - \bar{t}_i)$  whose contribution to the spectrum, for each frequency  $f$ , is  $\mathcal{F}(\delta(t - \bar{t}_i)) = e^{-j2\pi f \bar{t}_i} = \cos(2\pi f \bar{t}_i) - j \sin(2\pi f \bar{t}_i)$ . The number of samples to be computed for each of these terms is given by  $\frac{f_{max} - f_{min}}{\delta f}$ . Therefore, the number  $O$  of complex exponents to compute is:

$$O = \frac{f_{max} - f_{min}}{\delta f} N \equiv \frac{f_{max} - f_{min}}{\delta f} \frac{H}{P} K, \quad (3)$$

where  $H$  is the observation time horizon,  $P$  is the application period and  $K$  is the number of events recorded in each application period.

5.2.1 *Peak Detection Heuristic.* The peaks of the spectrum (and hence the period) are computed by the following heuristic algorithm:

1) compute a sampling of the amplitude spectrum  $S(f)$  of the signal  $s(t)G_H(t-H/2)$  (the modulus of its Fourier Transform) in the frequency range  $[f_{min}, f_{max}]$ , with step  $\delta f$ , as discussed above:

$$|S(f)| = \left| \sum_{i=1}^N e^{-j2\pi f \bar{t}_i} \right|; \quad (4)$$

2) identify a first set of peaks  $f_1, \dots, f_m$  as the local maxima of the amplitude spectrum in the range (ordered by frequency);

3) discard all peaks  $f_i$  for which  $S(f_i)$  is lower than  $\alpha$  times its average value  $\bar{S}$  (with  $\alpha$  configurable);

4) if the resulting set of candidate values is empty, then declare the application as non-periodic and **terminate**;

5) for each candidate frequency  $f_i$ , compute the sum  $\Sigma_i$  of the amplitude spectrum in correspondence of at most  $k^{max}$  integer multiples of  $f_i$  (set to 10 in the experiments), with a tolerance of  $\epsilon$ , i.e., compute:

$$\Sigma_i = \sum_{\substack{f_j \in [hf_i - \epsilon, hf_i + \epsilon] \\ h \in \{1, \dots, k^{max}\}, f_j \leq f_{max}}} |S(f_j)|.$$

6) select the frequency  $f_i$  corresponding to the highest  $\Sigma_i$  value.

The rationale of this algorithm is explained next. In the computation of the spectrum, due to the behaviour of the sinc function and to the inexact adherence of our model with the real signal, we have got a combination of main peaks and of secondary peaks. Our objective is to identify the main peaks and estimate their distance. More simply, we can identify the first main peak at a frequency greater than 0 and take its value (one of the main peaks is necessarily at frequency 0 and therefore the distance between two main peaks is given by the frequency of the first main peak). The first three steps identify the candidate peaks and rule out the evident secondary peaks using an empirical threshold  $\alpha$ . If no peak is left, we can conclude that the signal is not evidently periodic. Otherwise, we carry out a further analysis step considering that if we identified the first main peak, then further main peaks are expected to be at integer multiples of its frequency. Therefore, we accumulate the spectrum of all these frequencies using a tolerance  $\epsilon$  (to account for the fact that the peak could not be exactly at the expected frequency) and limiting the number of considered frequencies to  $k^{max}$ . The secondary peaks can be identified because of the smaller value resulting from this sum.

*Heuristic Complexity.* The complexity for the period detection heuristic is expressed in terms of number of frequencies of the computed transform that need to be scanned. Let  $F \triangleq \frac{f_{max} - f_{min}}{\delta f}$  be the number of computed samples for  $|S(f)|$ . The second and the third steps of the algorithm require the analysis of all the samples. Then (step 5), for each candidate peak frequency  $f_i$ , the values of the transform in correspondence of the integer multiples of  $f_i$ , with a tolerance of  $\epsilon$ , are summed up, up to  $f_{max}$ . The number of sums to make is given by  $\min \left\{ \frac{f_{max} - f_i}{f_i}, k^{max} \right\} \frac{\epsilon}{\delta \omega}$ ;

the final choice of the main peak is immediate and does not have any impact on the complexity. Therefore, the number  $E$  of considered elements in the frequency transform is bounded by:

$$E = \frac{f_{max} - f_{min}}{\delta f} + \sum_{f_i \in F_{max}} \min \left\{ \frac{f_{max} - f_i}{f_i}, k^{max} \right\} \frac{\epsilon}{\delta f}, \quad (5)$$

where  $F_{max}$  is the set of candidate peaks after step 3.

### 5.3 The Bandwidth Controller

The LFS++ Bandwidth controller requires the presence of an appropriate “sensor” inside the kernel that measures the CPU time consumed by the application in each interval. This information is fed into a “predictor” or “estimator” component, which determines the budget that best suits the application needs, based on the observation of past computation times of the application. The budget requests from all tasks are then processed by the supervisor.

The sensor is sampled periodically and its reading is used to estimate the duration of each job. Let  $P$  denote the application period (estimated by the period analyser), and let  $S$  denote the sampling period of the bandwidth controller. For the sake of simplicity, assume that  $S$  is equal to an integer multiple of  $P$ . Let  $W_k$  denote the measured time at the  $k^{th}$  activation of the feedback loop,  $W_{k-1}$  denote the time measured at the previous activation. Then, the new budget  $Q_k^{req}$  required for the next sampling interval is determined as follows:

$$Q_k^{req} = (1 + x) P \frac{\mathcal{P}(W_k - W_{k-1})}{S},$$

where  $x$  is called “spread factor” and  $\mathcal{P}(\cdot)$  is a prediction function returning the computation time expected for the next sampling period. The idea is to translate the expected application workload into the bandwidth allocated by the reservation (since  $P$  is set equal to the task period,  $Q_k^{req}/P$  is the bandwidth requested by the controller). In this paper, we propose a “percentile estimator” for the predictor  $\mathcal{P}$ , which basically memorises the sequence of the past  $N$  observed samples, and outputs the estimated  $p^{th}$  percentile of the computation times distribution<sup>2</sup>. This may be easily accomplished for  $p$  values, which correspond to a probability expressed as  $\frac{N-j}{N}$ , where  $j$  is an integer. For example, with  $N = 16$ , if  $p = 1.0$  ( $j = 0$ ) then one has to take the maximum over the last  $N$  samples. For  $p = 0.9375$  ( $j = 1$ ), one has to take the second maximum, and so forth. Although many different predictors could be used in place of the percentile estimator [Palopoli et al. 2009], the latter is of general applicability (it does not make particular assumptions on the application) and it is very suitable for soft real-time application where the user is typically interested in controlling the deadline miss ratio.

The factor  $x$  is essentially a design parameters, which in our experience is best chosen in the  $[0.1, 0.2]$  range. Essentially, it increases the bandwidth from its “ideal” assignment (the task utilisation). The choice of this parameters allows finding the

<sup>2</sup>From a theoretical standpoint, this methodology produces a percentile of the sample which is a good estimation of the percentile of the distribution if the latter is ergodic and if the horizon  $N$  is chosen large enough.

most appropriate balance between Quality of Service and expenditure of system resources. Indeed, a large value of  $x$  produces an overestimated bandwidth. Therefore, the system becomes more robust to prediction errors and it reacts more quickly to workload changes, paying the price of a potential waste of computation resources. Conversely, a small value for  $x$  corresponds to a conservative bandwidth choice but it increases the risk of QoS degradations when the system generates an unpredicted computation workload (e.g., a scene change for a streaming application).

## 6. THE PROPOSED ARCHITECTURE

The implementation of the scheme advocated in this paper requires: 1) the design of an appropriate architecture based on kernel-specific solutions, 2) the availability of the architecture-dependent blocks in Figure 3, namely the resource reservation scheduler, the event tracer, the workload monitor and the power manager. In this section, we briefly describe the architectural implementation, based on the Linux kernel, that we have developed and used for the experiments in the next section.

As far as the scheduling mechanism is concerned, we have used the AQuoSA architecture<sup>3</sup>, which extends the Linux kernel with a Resource Reservation scheduling mechanism. The Bandwidth Controller and the period analyser are implemented in a user-space daemon, which periodically collects information from the sensing blocks and performs the computation of the algorithms described in the previous section. This daemon interacts with the standard mechanisms present in the Linux kernel to carry out frequency switches on the CPU. In the rest of the section, we will shortly describe each of these components.

### 6.1 Workload Monitor

The workload monitor measures the time a task executes over an interval of time. For POSIX compliant systems (such as Linux) a sensor of this kind is the `clock_gettime()` system call that measures the so called `CLOCK_PROCESS_CPUTIME_ID` and the `CLOCK_THREAD_CPUTIME_ID` clock values, providing us exactly with the information we need at the granularity level of the process or of the thread. In our specific case, we used the API of the AQuoSA middleware and in particular the AQuoSA API call `qres.get_time()`, which returns the CPU time consumed by all the threads attached to a CBS since its creation.

### 6.2 The Event Tracer

The purpose of the event tracer is to pinpoint periodic events generated in the execution of a task. Any mechanism created to this purpose can be evaluated along two different dimensions: its accuracy and its intrusiveness. By accuracy we mean the ability to detect *exactly* events that are repeated with regular temporal patterns introducing a small noise in the measurements. By intrusiveness, we mean the extent of the modification on the basic structure of the kernel required to extract the information. We have identified two solutions that strike a different balance between these two conflicting metrics.

*Tracing the system calls.* The first solution is based on the consideration that periodic events are often associated to system calls. For instance, a typical periodic

<sup>3</sup><http://aquosa.sourceforge.net/>

task executes some operations (the task body) and then switches to a “blocked” scheduling condition as a result of the execution of a blocking system call (such as `clock_nanosleep()`). If we knew exactly the primitive used by the task to end a job, we could in principle trace its execution instants and extract a sequence of events which, with a good approximation, can be regarded as periodic. In fact, for a legacy application things are more complicated because we do not know which call is used to block the task, and the same call could be used for different purposes. For this reason, we need to trace the application for the use of a wide set of potentially blocking system calls. This tracing mechanism necessarily produces “noisy” measurements: only a very strict subset of the system calls are in fact periodic. On the other hand, this tracing mechanism can be implemented in a flexible way. In our previous works [Cucinotta et al. 2010; Cucinotta et al. 2009], we have shown both a kernel-based implementation, and an entirely user-space one relying on the Linux `ptrace()` system call. As the standard libraries implementing system calls are usually dynamically linked by applications, it is also possible to exploit dynamic linking to intercept the calls. A user-space implementation has the advantage of enabling the tracing mechanism without the need for root privileges.

*Tracing the Wakeup Events.* The tracing of the WKEs leads to more accurate results as compared to the tracing of the system calls and to other SREs. In fact, the activation of a job is invariably associated to a WKE. Therefore, any periodic task certainly generates a periodic stream of events. Of course, there could be other WKEs in the different jobs of a task that are not repeated periodically (e.g., for occasional synchronisations or I/O operations). However, the jitter introduced in the measurement of a WKE is necessarily smaller than the one introduced by recording the exit of the system call associated with the event. Indeed, the system call exit time may only be recorded when the process is actually scheduled by the kernel, while wake-up events are recorded inside the kernel, without any scheduling delay. Also, the number of expected WKEs is considerably smaller than the one of other SREs, with an evident reduction of the overhead associated to the period detection mechanism, which needs to process such events.

On the other hand, the tracing of WKEs is necessarily more intrusive: it has to be carried out inside the kernel using root privileges. The potential security risk is, in our case, alleviated by the use of a system daemon, which manages all the different users and can implement a variety of security policies (e.g., a maximum bandwidth “quota” allowed to un-privileged users). This daemon is the only entity in the architecture that requires to execute with root privileges.

A first possibility for tracing the WKEs in Linux is offered by the `ftrace` kernel-level tracer. This tool was designed for debugging purposes, and is unfit for “production” installations of the OS. Indeed, it traces much more events than needed (not only wake-ups, but also sleeps, signal reception, and preemption times) and produces a formatted output (wasteful to create and to parse). For these reasons, `ftrace` is hardly an acceptable option in our context.

Therefore, we have extended our `qtrace` Linux kernel patch (initially used for the system calls) to trace processes wake-up events. This patch has been developed along the following lines

- a special device allows a user-space program to specify the tasks for which the

tracing of WKEs has to be enabled; an appropriate flag is set in the task descriptor that enables the tracing of the events related to the task;

- a circular memory buffer is used within the kernel to record wake-up times of the traced tasks; each event is recorded in a data structure containing the type of the event and the Linux Thread ID of the task that generated it;
- a user-space program (in our case the LFS++ daemon) periodically depletes the circular buffer communicating the traces to the period analyser.

As shown in Section 7, the **qtrace** patch allows for substantial overhead savings with respect to the use of the **ftrace** tracer.

### 6.3 Power Management

A popular approach to manage power in PC is by operating on the CPU frequency. This can be done using kernel-level components (e.g., the Linux “governors”), or user-space daemons (e.g., **cpuspeed** or **powernowd**), which execute asynchronously with respect to the applications. When a mechanism of this kind changes the CPU frequency, the QoS performance provided by the LFS++ framework is at serious risk of being disrupted. More specifically, increasing the CPU frequency cannot affect the task QoS since the CPU utilisation of the task (the ratio between computation time and period) decreases. The transient over-provisioning of bandwidth is, in this case, gradually compensated by the feedback. On the contrary, a frequency decrease corresponds to an increase of the task utilisation. Until the LFS++ performs a bandwidth adjustment, the real-time application accumulates delay with a possibly severe QoS degradation can be severe.

The problem is that the LFS++ Bandwidth Controller described in Section 5.3 uses observations on the past activations of the task and can react slowly to the sudden utilisation changes introduced by a CPU frequency switch. To deal with this problem, we integrated a power management algorithm into the LFS++ daemon to implement a QoS sensitive power management policy organised as follows. The daemon periodically monitors the system workload and utilises the **powernowd** power-management algorithm, to keep the overall system utilization in a target configurable interval (defaulting to the [20%, 80%] range). Whenever a CPU frequency increase is required by the algorithm, it is actuated immediately. More complex is the management of a frequency decrease request. In this case, the daemon performs a rough “projection” of the expected utilisation of the controlled real-time tasks with the new target frequency and:

- if the projected utilisation overcomes the schedulability bound in Equation (1), then the frequency switch is dismissed;
- otherwise, a *mode-change protocol* is engaged by the daemon: the budgets assigned to the controlled tasks are first increased according to the projected utilisation and the CPU frequency switch is delayed to the time instant in which all the new budgets have been changed on the underlying scheduler (this amounts to waiting at most for a time duration equal to the maximum reservation period among the ones active in the system).

After a frequency switch, the history of computation times collected by the bandwidth controllers is reset to a single sample equal to the projected budget value, so as to allow the control loops to promptly adapt to the changed workload.

The algorithm for projecting utilisation figures across CPU frequencies is very simple. Given the current frequency  $f_{curr}$ , the current utilisation  $U_{curr}$ , and the target frequency  $f_{dest}$ , the projected utilization  $U_{dest}$  is estimated as:

$$U_{dest} = U_{curr} \frac{f_{curr}}{f_{dest}} \quad (6)$$

Although this approach may seem a naive one, it is sufficient for our needs since fine-grained adjustments of the budget can be deferred to the subsequent executions of the LFS++ bandwidth controller.

The inclusion of power-awareness within LFS++ introduces substantial improvements in the promptness of the reaction to frequency changes. As shown in Section 7, not only does this mechanism radically reduce the transient QoS degradation when the frequency is reduced, but it also ensures a quicker convergence of the bandwidth controller when the frequency increases, enhancing its efficiency.

As a final remark, the choice of **powernowd** for the power adaptation logic is incidental. We believe that a similar solution could be found with other and possibly more sophisticated (and/or effective) algorithms for power management.

## 7. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The techniques and architecture described in the previous sections have been implemented in a Linux-based system and used to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach through an extensive set of experiments<sup>4</sup>. First of all, LFS++ is compared with the standard Linux scheduler, showing its advantages for scheduling multimedia applications. A second batch of experiments shows that LFS++ can reduce the application’s response times when multiple instances of a real-time application are simultaneously active. The third batch of experiment compares the performance of LFS++ with a classic feedback scheduler. The tracing mechanism presented in this paper (which traces the WKEs) is then compared with the one presented in our previous work (which traces the SREs). The fifth set of experiments shows the effectiveness of the LFS++/Power integration on platforms with power-switching capabilities. Finally, overhead measurements are briefly summarised.

### 7.1 Comparing LFS++ and Linux

In this section, we compare the LFS++ approach with the default general-purpose scheduler provided by the Linux kernel by measuring the amount of desynchronisation between the reproduced audio and video in a video player (**mplayer**). We play a segment of the “Big Buck Bunny” movie<sup>5</sup>, containing H.264 video (encoded at 25fps, with frame size 1920×1080), and AAC audio. The movie is played under different load conditions, and the player was modified to print the difference between the presentation timestamps (PTS) of the currently reproduced audio and video frames (the Audio/Video (A/V) desynchronisation). Such value is representative of the quality of service perceived by the user during the playback.

<sup>4</sup>The Linux kernel patches and user-space tools can be downloaded from <http://retis.sssup.it/people/tommaso/papers/acmtecs10>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.bigbuckbunny.org>



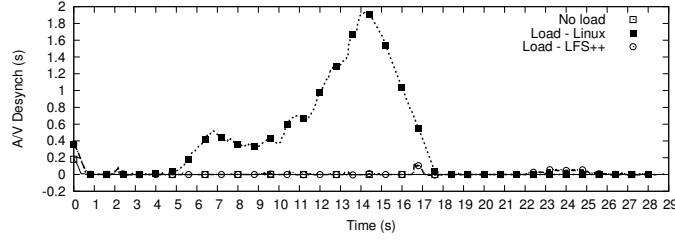


Fig. 5. A/V desynchronisation of `mplayer` under various conditions.

As a background workload, we launch `eclipse`, a commonly used development IDE environment based on Java. Experiments have been performed on an Intel(R) Core(TM)2 Duo P9600 CPU running at 2.66 GHz. The IDE environment takes about 15 seconds to start-up on the considered hardware.

The obtained A/V desynchronisation value during the first 30 seconds of the play are shown in Figure 5. First, we run the player alone. After an initial transient (required by the application to tune its internal buffers) the A/V desynchronisation stabilises on a constant value (the “No Load” plot in the Figure).

Then, we repeat the play, launching the IDE application at time  $t = 2s$ . The desynchronisation (plot labelled as “Load - Linux”) increases to  $0.4s$  between  $t = 5s$  and  $t = 10s$ , and then steeply increases to a peak of nearly  $1.9s$  around  $t = 14s$ . When the IDE application ends the start-up phase, the desynchronisation decreases back to negligible values close to 0.

Finally, we repeat the same experiment scheduling the player application under the supervision of LFS++. The desynchronisation (curve labelled as “Load - LFS++”) remains almost always below  $0.1s$ , except for a small peak of  $0.2s$  at about  $t = 17s$ . The maximum peak of the A/V desynchronisation experienced by `mplayer` when under LFS++ is about *one tenth* of the value experienced when using the standard Linux scheduler.

## 7.2 LFS++ and Multiple Real-Time Applications

In order to compare LFS++ with the Linux scheduler in presence of multiple real-time applications, we use `rt-app`, a synthetic periodic application we developed. The application is activated periodically with a specified period, wastes CPU cycles by running a dummy loop, then it records the achieved job response time and goes to sleep until the next activation. Job response times are recorded in a static memory array and stored in a file at the end of the program. For such an application, we assumed a relative deadline equal to the activation period.

We run concurrently 3 instances of `rt-app`, with different periods and computation time tuned so as to achieve about 80% of overall system load (measured with `top`). The parameters of the applications are reported in Table I.

The three applications are started at the same time and in Figure 6 we report the Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF) of the response-times obtained for the application with the smallest period (the one with the strictest timing constraints). When using the default `SCHED_OTHER` Linux scheduling policy (curve labelled as “Linux”), the response times exhibit a large variability, with nearly 57% of the

Table I. Parameters of the launched `rt-app` instances.

Application	Period ( $\mu s$ )	Iterations	Load (%)
rt-app	3505	6000	30%
rt-app	8220	13000	28%
rt-app	100000	120000	21%

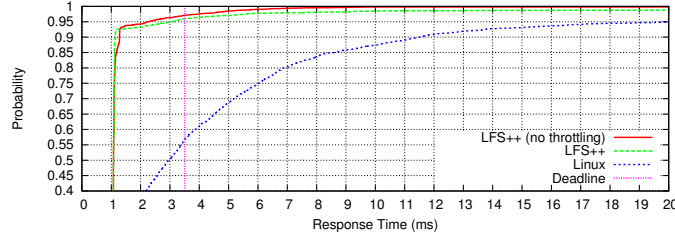


Fig. 6. Response-time CDF obtained under LFS++ compared with the one obtained under the Linux default scheduling policy.

values below the deadline of  $3.5ms$  (plot labelled as “Deadline”). For most soft real-time applications, a probability of deadline miss of 43% is hardly tolerable, and the application should better be dropped by the system.

Scheduling the same task set with LFS++ achieves a much more stable sequence of response times (curve labelled as “LFS++”), which remain for nearly the 93% of the jobs below the  $1.5ms$  value (half of the relative deadline). About 5% of the jobs exhibit a deadline miss, with a relative reduction of the deadline miss ratio of nearly 75% as compared to Linux. However, the CDF in this case displays a few residual response time values (below 2%) which are far beyond the deadline. This is due to the interference of the real-time throttling mechanism in the Linux kernel, which by default limits the maximum rough utilisation exploitable by tasks at real-time priorities at  $950ms$  every  $1s$  (a security/stability feature preserving starvation of the system if a real-time task goes into an endless loop due to a bug). When this mechanism comes into play during a job of a `rt-app` instance is running, the completion of such a job is delayed until the next throttling period, which may be as distant as  $50ms$ . In fact, by disabling the real-time throttling this problem vanishes (curve labelled as “LFS++ (no throttling)”), with a maximum response time that is about two periods and a half.

### 7.3 Comparison with Adaptive Reservations

While the LFS++ evidently outperforms the standard Linux scheduler, it clearly suffers a performance gap against adaptive reservations mechanism, which require a strong modification of the application code (impossible for legacy application). To quantify this gap, we modified a real-time video encoder, grabbing frames at a resolution of 640 by 480 and a rate of 25 Hz from a webcam, and encoding them in MPEG2 format for transmission over the network. The encoder outputs I frames alternating with P frames, with quite different corresponding computation time requirements. The computation times for the same frame types fluctuates depending on the video complexity. In the modified encoder we inserted function calls to the AQuoSa middleware at the beginning of each job (`qmgr_begin_cycle()`) and at

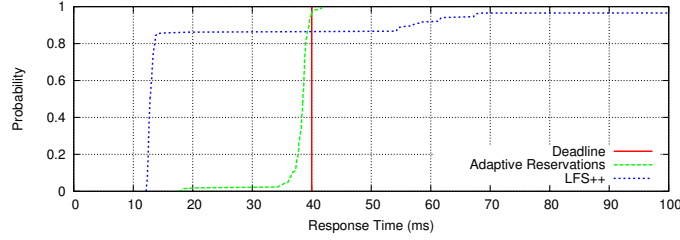


Fig. 7. Response-time CDF obtained with LFS++ and adaptive reservations.

the end of each job (`qmgr_end_cycle()`). The modified encoder communicates its period to the middleware before starting. This way it is possible to use a bandwidth controller configured as in [Palopoli et al. 2009].

In Figure 7, we compare the CDF of the response times obtained using LFS++ with the original (unmodified) encoder against the one obtained with the AR policy. The cooperation of the application produces understandably a strong improvement in the performance. Indeed, the response times are for more of the 90% of the jobs below the deadline. Also for more than 95% of the jobs the response time is not smaller than 35ms. This shape of the CDF (very close to an ideal step) proves the very precise tracking of the resource requirements. The LFS++ scheduler has certainly a worse performance. More than 85% of the jobs have a response time between 10ms and 20ms and the CDF has a long tail after the deadline. This gap is due to two different facts: 1) the fine grained observations on the system evolution that the AR is able to collect at the start and termination of each job, 2) the use of a predictor optimised for the application (i.e., using information on the coding scheme). On the other hand, the performance of the LFS++ is acceptable: the probability of meeting the deadline is around 85% and for 92% of the jobs the response time is below 60ms. This performance is obtained without any modification to the application and by a controller that is activated with a sampling period of 1s. The AR controller, on the contrary, is activate upon each job termination (i.e., about 25 times per second).

#### 7.4 Tracing of Wakeup Events

In this paper we introduced a novel tracing mechanism based on detection of wakeup events (WKEs) at the kernel level, as opposed to the system call events (SREs) that we used in our prior work [Cucinotta et al. 2009; Cucinotta et al. 2010].

The new tracing mechanism has been tested and compared with system call tracing by using `mplayer` and the “Big Buck Bunny” movie described in Section 7.1. The two different tracers have been used to infer the player’s periodicity under different system loads and using different observation intervals.

In Figure 8 (a), we show the average and standard deviation of the detected frequency, at varying observation interval. While for observation intervals greater than 0.8s both tracers correctly identify the frequency, for smaller intervals the frequency detected from the WKEs is much more stable than the one detected from the SREs. The improvement in tracing the wakeup events is also visible in the introduced overhead. In Figure 8 (b), we plot the number of detected events versus

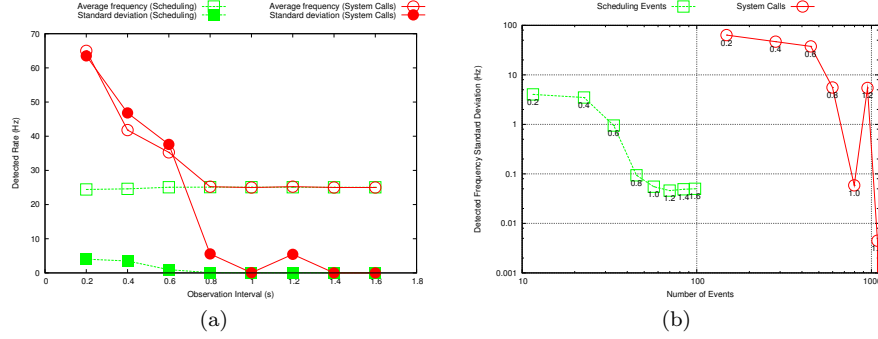


Fig. 8. (a) Detected frequency statistics in the cases of tracing the wakeup events and the system calls, at varying observation times. (b) Number of detected events vs detected frequency precision, at varying observation times.

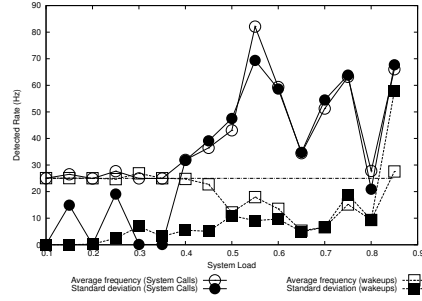


Fig. 9. Detected frequency statistics for different system loads.

the standard deviation of the detected frequency, for various observation times. As it can be seen, using the WKEs leads to a much lower number of events to process and a small standard deviation. When tracing system calls, the standard deviation of the detected frequency can be reduced by increasing the observation interval, but this results in a large number of events to be processed (note the logarithmic scale on both axes). The number of events to process is reduced of barely one order of magnitude, improving the overhead incurred in the computation of the frequency transform, which is linearly dependent on such value (see Equation (3)).

Further experiments showed that the presence of some real-time load in the system decreases the precision of the rate detection mechanism, but the mechanism based on WKEs tracing is less affected than the mechanism based on system calls tracing. For example, Figure 9 shows the detected frequency for an observation interval of 0.6s and an increasing system load. When the system load grows beyond the 35% threshold, the event tracing mechanism is not accurate anymore. The mechanism based on tracing WKEs is still very accurate up to a load of 45%, and remains more generally more accurate than SREs tracing (up to a load of 85%), as shown by the respective standard deviation curves. This problem is due to the scheduling interference from other real-time tasks. Indeed, if a real-time task executes alone (or with non real-time tasks) and it is scheduled through a CBS,

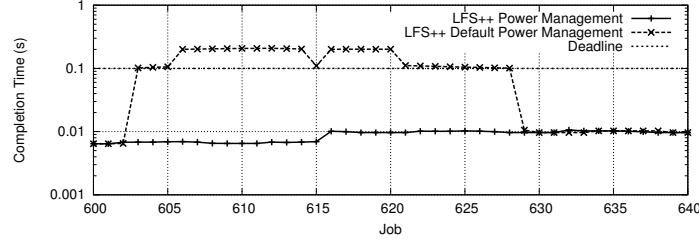


Fig. 10. Job completion times of a periodic application controlled by LFS++ when using the integrated power management logics, as compared to when using the default one.

it invariably starts right after its activation. Therefore, if the task is periodic, so will be the trace of the events it generates. On the contrary, in presence of other real-time tasks, it can receive its reserved units of execution anywhere inside the reservation period. Therefore, the trace will be much more noisy hindering the detection of the period. The problem is further emphasised if we detect the SREs instead of WKEs. Indeed, at least one WKE always occurs at the start of beginning of the period independently from the workload, whereas the system calls event are raised when the task executes (and the execution is affected by the workload).

## 7.5 Power Management

To understand the need for integrating power management into LFS++ we have observed the behaviour of a real-time periodic application (with a period of 100 ms), executed on a system with frequency scaling supported and enabled. We ran `rt-app` using first the LFS++ power management logic, then disabling it, but enabling an external instance of `powernowd`.

Figure 10 shows the completion times of the jobs of the application during a frequency transition. Before job 600 the system is executing a background best effort workload (a simple cpu hog), that causes both of the power management logics (the one embedded in LFS++ and the default one) to maintain the system at its highest frequency. When the background workload is stopped, the total load of the system decreases, and both of the power management logics decrease the frequency of the CPU. The CPU frequency increases the response time in approximate proportion to the ratio between the old and the new frequency (resp. 1.5 GHz and 2.4 GHz). In the case LFS++ is not synchronised with the power management mechanism, the increase in response time is not reflected soon enough in an increase of the budget assigned to the application; this causes the overruns shown in the figure, that last until job 629; at that point the feedback logic adapts itself to the new computation time of the application and we see no more overruns. When LFS++ acts also as the power manager, we see no overrun, because before updating the CPU speed LFS++ waits for the completion of the mode-change protocol (from the figure we can see that the actual CPU speed change happens some time after than in the other case), and the new budget is sufficient to fit the increased execution time.

Tracer	Average (sec)	Relative average	Standard deviation (sec)
NOTRACE	14.834	-	1.04432
QTRACE (WAKEUPS)	14.837	0.02%	1.04843
QTRACE (SYSCALLS)	14.945	0.74%	1.11884
QOSTRACE	15.156	2.17%	1.05422
STRACE	15.727	9.32%	0.796605

Table II. Overhead introduced by various tracers, compared to when no tracer is used (first row).

## 7.6 LFS++ Overhead

The different sources of run-time overhead introduced by the LFS++ scheduler can be classified as follows: **tracing overhead**, due to the tracing mechanism, which needs to record the set of interesting events for the traced applications; **period detection overhead**, due to the Fourier transform computation and analysis needed to infer the period of the traced applications; **adaptive scheduling overhead**, due to the adaptation loop in which the workload in the last sampling instant is observed and the reservation budget is accordingly modulated.

*Tracing Overhead.* The tracing overhead has been evaluated by measuring the time spent by `ffmpeg`<sup>6</sup> to transcode a video, with various system-call tracers attached during the entire run. Each run has been repeated 10 times, and the average and standard deviation of the total transcoding time has been computed. Results are reported in Table II. First, we determined a baseline, running the transcoding process without any tracer active, then we traced the program with our `qtrace` tracer, described in Section 6.2.

The measured overhead includes both the time for logging the system-call information within the kernel, which is really negligible and hard to measure, and the one needed by `lfs++` to download the time stamps through a special device, which introduces a few context switches towards the tracing process (much fewer than when using `ptrace()`-based tools). Finally, for completeness, also the overhead obtained while tracing the same program by using the standard `strace` Linux tool and the `qostrace` tool presented in [Cucinotta et al. 2009] are reported. As it can be seen, the presented tracer introduces an overhead close to 0.7% (relative to the application computation time) when tracing system calls, and almost no overhead (below the measurement noise threshold) when tracing wakeups.

*Period Detection Overhead.* The period detection overhead is due to various components, such as the computation of the Fourier Transform and the Peak Detection Heuristic. Hence, the time needed for period detection depends on the number of generated events (which in turn depends on the observation interval horizon) and on the target frequency range and granularity, as discussed in Section 5.2.1. Section 7.4 already presented an experimental evaluation of the impact of the observation interval on the number of generated events and on the precision of the rate detection mechanism. The results presented in said section are consistent with another, more extensive, evaluation of the overheads that has already appeared in our previous work [Cucinotta et al. 2010].

Here, a short summary of the experiments presented in the previous paper (based on `mplayer` reproducing a set of mp3 files) is reported. Figure 11 presents the plot

<sup>6</sup>More information is available at <http://www.ffmpeg.org>.

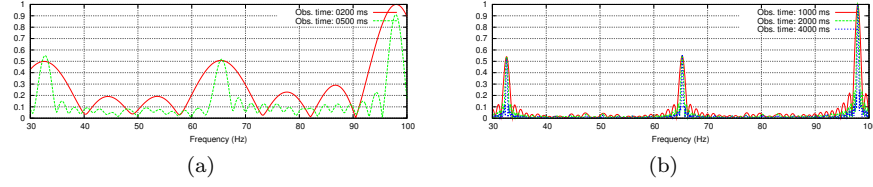


Fig. 11. Normalized frequency-transform of the events obtained by tracing `mplayer` at varying tracing time.

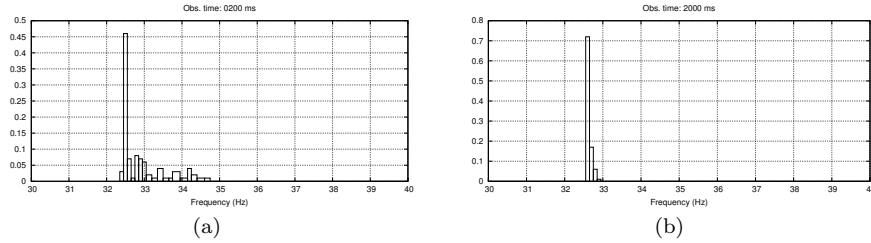


Fig. 12. PMF of the frequency detected by `LFS++` for `mplayer` at varying tracing times.

of the amplitude spectrum obtained for different tracing intervals (note that in order to enhance readability, values on the Y axis have been normalised to the maximum value of the amplitude spectrum - hence the highest peak is 1.0). As the plots in Figure 11 (a) show, the periodic nature of the application is evident already from a tracing time of  $500ms$ , in which the peaks of the curve close to the  $32.5$ ,  $65$  and  $97.5Hz$  frequencies are quite evident. However, the plots in Figure 11 (b) show that the periodicity becomes indisputable starting from  $1s$  of tracing time.

Each period-detection operation with a given tracing time has been repeated 100 times, and the PMF curves of the detected frequency have been computed and reported in Figure 12. In Figure 12 (a), we can see that a tracing time as short as  $200ms$  may lead to a small error in the detected frequency, that remains between  $32.5Hz$  and  $35Hz$  most of the time, with a few occurrences on the second harmonic at  $97.5Hz$  (not reported on the plots for readability). Increasing the tracing time, the PMF becomes tighter around the  $32.5Hz$  value, with a few occurrences of the second harmonic persist (between 0 and 2 on the 100 repetitions)

As a final remark, although the mechanism described above can be used to track period changes in the application, its maximum latency in responding to such changes is lower bounded by time given by the sum of: 1) sampling time of the period analyser, 2) observation interval (required for the collection of events), 3) execution of the detection algorithm. This latency can be significant. Therefore, our approach cannot be used on applications that change their period too frequently.

## 8. FUTURE WORK AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have proposed an adaptive mechanism for real-time scheduling of periodic legacy applications. Our first contribution is to show (by theoretical and experimental data) that an effective choice for the scheduling parameters can be made only based on a correct estimation of the activation period and of the

computation time of the task. Our second contribution is to show algorithmic solution to estimate these parameters based on a trace of events generated in the kernel. The solution we outline has been implemented in the Linux kernel and we show, as our third contribution, how to tackle the architectural issues that the approach raises. Finally, we offer full evidence of the effectiveness of the approach on a large collection of experimental data, which displays the radical improvement in performance over the standard scheduling solutions.

Our future investigation will take several directions. The first one is the adaptation of the mechanism to the case of multi-threaded applications. The results that we collected are encouraging but the technique needs some refinement (e.g., for the evaluation of several periods from a single trace). The second one is the extension of the technique to symmetric multi-core machines. In this context, an open research issue is to design an optimised cooperation between the load balancing mechanisms inside the kernel, the real-time partitioning of the tasks between the cores and the adaptive mechanisms proposed in this paper. Another interesting research direction is on the control scheme. Interesting open problems are on the period detection scheme (e.g., heuristics with a smaller overhead than the one proposed here) and on predictors. While the percentile estimator that we propose here represents (in our experience) a good compromise between generality and simplicity, it is possible that for particular classes of applications other predictors produce better results.

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